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TO: **Economic Support Supervisors
Economic Support Lead Workers
Training Staff
Child Care Coordinators
W-2 Agencies
Workforce Development Boards
Job Center Leads and Managers**

FROM: Amy Mendel-Clemens
Communications Section
Bureau of Health Care Eligibility

BHCE/BWP OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 04-07

DATE: 02/25/2004

FS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	SC	<input type="checkbox"/>
CTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	CC	<input type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FSET	<input type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input type="checkbox"/>	CF	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input type="checkbox"/>	RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>
WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	WtW	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	EP	<input type="checkbox"/>			

PRIORITY: HIGH

SUBJECT: **TRANSITIONAL FOOD STAMP PROGRAM**

CROSS REFERENCE: Farm Bill 4115

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 1, 2004

PURPOSE

This memo introduces the new Transitional Food Stamp program for Food Stamp households who stop receiving Wisconsin Works or Tribal TANF cash payments. This memo also describes the process associated with the automation of this program in CARES.

BACKGROUND

Federal Regulations for the Food Stamp (FS) Program related to the 2002 Farm Bill legislation allowed Wisconsin the option to issue Transitional Food Stamp (TFS) benefits for five months to eligible families when a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash benefit ends. TFS will automatically extend food stamp benefits for five months to households whose Wisconsin Works (W-2) or Tribal TANF (TT) cash payments end, easing the shift from welfare-to-work and providing a safety net to families who may lose cash assistance for other reasons. This new program will often result in the family receiving the maximum FS benefit for their reported household size.

POLICYCURRENT POLICY

FS households who leave W-2 or TT cash assistance receive FS benefits based on their current monthly income. They must continue to report all required changes, which may have an impact on the amount of benefits they receive. If their new income is great enough, it may cause their FS case to close entirely, thus having a negative impact on the family.

NEW POLICY

Beginning after adverse action in March 2004, a FS household whose W-2 or TT cash payment ends will automatically receive five months of TFS benefits. To be eligible, a member of the FS group must:

- have participated in either a W-2T, full or part-time CSJ, CMC placement, or TT placement,
- have received at least one or more cash payments and
- be part of an active FS case in the benefit determination month and the month the last W-2 or TT payment was issued.

NOTE ➤ The household is not eligible for TFS if the W-2 or TT payment is sanctioned to zero for non-participation.

The TFS benefit amount is calculated using income, expenses and household information from the food stamp budget for the month **prior to the last W-2 or TT payment**. This is called the “benefit determination month”. The gross W-2 or TT amount in the benefit determination month will be deducted from the budgeted income for the TFS calculation. This will often result in the family receiving the maximum FS benefit for the reported household size.

Example: Jo Ann is open for FS and was assigned to a CSJ placement in January. Her FS AG includes herself and her two children. Jo Ann started a fulltime job on April 21st. When she reports her new job, the worker ends her CSJ placement on April 20th and enters the new employment wage information of \$900.00 per month on AFWG. Jo Ann continues to receive regular FS benefits in May and June. She receives her final W-2 payment on June 1. Her TFS benefit period will begin July 1st and continue through November 30th. The TFS benefit amount is determined using the income, expenses and household size from the FS budget for May, minus the gross W-2 payment.

If the household member returns to a W-2 or TT payment position while receiving TFS, the TFS amount will remain frozen until the end of the five-month period. There is no limit to the number of times a household is eligible for TFS benefits.

Example: Linda is eligible for TFS from February through June. She is injured in a fall in May and is unable to work. In May, she re-applies for W-2 and is placed in a W-2T. The TFS benefit period will continue through June. Because the five-month TFS benefit period ends in June, Linda completes a recertification review for regular FS benefits in June, and starts receiving them in July. Linda returns to her full time job in August. Her household will receive another five months of TFS benefits once her W-2 payment ends.

The TFS benefit is frozen for the next five months. Families are not required to report changes during this five month period. Changes reported for other programs will not affect the TFS benefit amount. At the end of the five-month period the household must complete a recertification review to continue to receive a benefit.

NOTE ➤ Any changes in income, expenses, household size, etc. that occur **after** the benefit determination month will not affect the TFS benefit amount (with the exception of dual participation as noted below).

TFS BENEFIT AMOUNT ADJUSTMENT EXCEPTION

Dual Participation

The only time a TFS allotment amount changes within the five month period is if a TFS food unit member moves out **and** becomes eligible to receive FS in another case. The TFS group's benefit amount will be reduced due to the change in household size. The maximum allotment amount will be adjusted to the allotment amount for the new household size. Income and expenses used in the original TFS benefit determination will remain the same even if the income or expenses belonged to the individual that left the household. This newly calculated benefit amount will remain the same for the remainder of the five-month benefit period. Should that same person move back into the original TFS household, the benefit amount will remain at the reduced amount for the rest of the five-month period.

The dual participation policy is explained to the FS customer in the initial TFS notice and an additional notice will be sent if the allotment is reduced.

Example: Sally and her two roommates share the same apartment and receive FS on the same case. Sally stopped receiving her W-2 payment in June because her only child graduated from high school and moved out. The FS food unit consisting of Sally, her son and her two roommates receive TFS for 5 months. The household size and the allotment did not change because Sally's son never applied for his own food stamps after he moved out of the household.

If Sally's son begins receiving FS in another case, Sally's FS benefit would be reduced automatically at Adverse Action.

COMPANION CASES

The entire food unit, whether or not they are included in the W-2 assistance group are eligible for TFS if a W-2 or TT cash payment ends.

Example: Simon, along with his two brothers, lives with their sister Dana and her two children. They are all part of Simon's food unit. Dana has been receiving a monthly W-2 payment but recently started a new job. Dana will receive her last cash payment July 1st. Dana's W-2 payments make Simon's entire FS food unit eligible for TFS. Simon's TFS benefit period will begin August 1st and includes himself, his two brothers, their sister Dana and her two children.

A FS group that contains two W-2/TT groups who both receive a cash payment would be eligible for TFS if one W-2 or TT group stops receiving a W-2 or TT payment. If the other W-2 or TT group stops receiving a W-2 or TT payment during the five month benefit period, the TFS benefit amount remains frozen at the original amount. No additional months are added to the TFS five month time period.

APPLYING FOR REGULAR FS

During the TFS Benefit Period

TFS households may request a recertification for regular FS at anytime during the five-month TFS benefit period. There may be situations when changes in household size, income, expenses, etc, would cause a household to be eligible for additional FS benefits. The request to end TFS and apply for regular FS is processed as a recertification review. The question "Transitional FS Open, Do you want to re-apply for regular FS?" has been added to ACPA and will display when a household is eligible for TFS benefits. When a household requests to end their TFS benefits and apply for regular FS benefits, this question is answered with <Y> and the worker can determine a regular FS allotment amount. The recipient has the choice of which allotment they will receive. If the recipient chooses to receive regular FS benefits and end the TFS benefit, a face-to-face recertification review must be completed. This process is described in more detail under CARES Processing later in this memo.

When TFS Benefit Period Expires

The TFS benefit period will end after five months. To continue receiving FS benefits the household must complete a recertification review before the end of the 5th month of the TFS benefit period. TFS households will receive a notice to contact their worker to schedule the recertification review approximately 45 days before the end of the TFS benefit period. The applicant must complete a face to face interview and turn in necessary verification for their household's current situation to avoid any gap in FS benefits.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The household has no reporting requirements for TFS through the five month TFS benefit period. Any information reported and acted upon for other programs or through DX matches will not change the benefit amount. Medicaid (MA), BadgerCare (BC), Child Care (CC) and W-2 reporting requirements remain the same.

SANCTIONS

If members in the FS group are sanctioned in the benefit determination month the individual participation status will be frozen for the five months. If the entire household is sanctioned off TANF and FS the household will not be eligible for TFS. If a TFS household member receives a child support, drug felon, FSET, or IPV sanction after the TFS benefit determination month or during the five month benefit period the sanction will not be applied and the original benefit amount will remain frozen. If a QC sanction is applied during the five month transitional period, the group remains eligible for TFS. When the household recertifies for regular FS at the end of the five-month period, the household's current circumstances will be assessed and the proper sanctions applied.

FSET EXEMPTION

TFS group members are FSET exempt while receiving TFS. The TFS exemption code is TF. The exemption begins as soon as the worker processes AIWP after ending TT or W-2 or changing W-2 from a paid placement to a case management only placement. If CARES does not determine the exemption correctly, the worker should override the referral by entering TF on AIWP.

PAYMENT ACCURACY

Local agencies and the household will be held harmless for TFS inaccuracies that are due to prior errors in the food stamp benefit calculation. As long as the TFS is calculated by using the budget from the benefit determination month and excluding the W-2/TT payment, the TFS allotment amount will be considered correct.

CARES PROCESSINGW-2 AND TFS

Eligibility for TFS benefits will be determined by CARES at Adverse Action (AA) in the month the last W-2 payment is issued, **if the FS case is open in the benefit determination month and the month the last W-2 payment is issued.** The TFS benefit amount will be calculated using the income, expenses and household size from the FS budget for the month prior to the last month a W-2 cash payment is received. If the household receives a W-2 payment for only one month, CARES will look at the month prior and use the budget and household situation without subtracting TANF since it was not in the budget during the benefit determination month.

If the FS case is closed in either the benefit determination month or the month the last W-2 payment is issued, the case is not eligible for TFS. If the case is open in the benefit determination month but closed in the month the last W-2 payment is issued, the TFS benefit will be determined automatically if the FS case reopens before AA in that last W-2 month. If the FS case reopens after AA, the worker will have to enter the reason code "544" on AGOE to set the five month TFS benefit period. Once the override is confirmed on AGECE, this action will properly set the TFS benefit period, not requiring any additional worker action. Once the initial override is set, workers will not have to return to AGOE each time they run SFEX/SFED. The budget on AGFB does not have to be adjusted once the TFS benefit amount is entered on AGECE. After confirming the override on AGECE, the worker must then go to AGOR to adjust the review date to set the 5-month certification period.

TRIBAL TANF(TT) AND TFS

When a FS household's TT payment ends, the FS AG is eligible to receive TFS, unless the same TT group receives a W-2 payment the following month. CARES will determine TFS eligibility for households receiving TT when:

- The end MM/YY field is completed on a TT AFUI sequence, or
- The payment amount on a TT AFUI sequence is changed to zero.

The TFS benefit period will begin the month following the change on AFUI if the change is made and confirmed before Adverse Action (AA). If the change is made and confirmed after AA the TFS benefit period will begin the month following the next month after the change is made. For example, if the worker end dates the TT on July 10th, the TFS benefits will begin in August. If the TT is end dated on July 24th, after AA, TFS benefits will be issued in September.

In cases where a W-2 payment will be issued in the month following the last TT payment, workers must first confirm the W-2 payment, rerun SFEX, and confirm all benefits. This will continue regular FS benefits for the household.

In two parent households and companion cases if one individual's W-2 payment position ends and another individual begins to receive TT in the next month, without a gap, the FS group is **not** eligible for TFS. Due to CARES limitations, **CARES incorrectly opens TFS in these cases**. The worker must change the reason code on AGOE from 544 to 547, confirm the override and rerun SFEX/SFED to issue regular FS benefits. If the TT payment does not begin the month following the last W-2 payment, TFS benefits **should** open automatically.

NOTE ➤ WHEN END DATING A SCREEN, ALWAYS UPDATE THE BEGIN MMY TO THE MONTH THE INCOME IS ENDING.

CARES AND DUAL PARTICIPATION

When a FS household reports a member has moved out of the TFS household, the worker should enter a "15" living arrangement code on ANLA for that individual, run SFEX/SFED, and then delete the individual on ANID, rerun SFEX/SFED and confirm. The original TFS benefit amount will remain unchanged for the full five month benefit period provided the person who was removed does not begin receiving FS in another case. If this individual does receive FS in another case, CARES will decrease the original TFS household size by one and the allotment amount accordingly. CARES will make this change at Adverse Action for the following month.

NOTE ➤ You must rerun SFEX/SFED and confirm all benefits on AGECE after deleting an individual on ANID.

If a worker is notified by another state that a TFS household member is receiving FS in another state, the TFS household size should also decrease by one person. If the individual is still included in the case, the worker should update the begin date on ANBR and enter a <Y> for receiving FS in another state. CARES will then adjust the benefit amount automatically at adverse action.

If the individual has been deleted from the case, the worker must complete an override on AGOE to decrease the benefit amount. The worker will be able to adjust the benefit by entering the new amount on AGOE and confirming the new benefit on AGECE. The budget on AGFB does not have to be adjusted and the new benefit amount will hold in CARES until the end of the TFS benefit period.

If a TFS household moves into a household with individuals that are required to be included in the same food unit, the newly configured household must decide whether to:

- Add the new members on to the TFS case (the TFS benefit amount is frozen and will not increase if new members are added to the group), or
- Reapply for FS with the new members and close the TFS case, or
- Add them to an already open FS case, if one exists, and close the TFS case.

Example: Rosa, a 20 year-old mother of two, received her second TFS allotment in June. Rosa called her worker to report a change in address and that she and her children are now living with her parents (who also have an open FS case). The worker explained that because Rosa is under 22, she **must** be included in the same group as her parents. She and her parents can decide whether to add the parents to the TFS case or if Rosa and her two children should join the parents' FS case. The worker ran a simulated case that showed the household's allotment would be greater if Rosa's parents were added to her TFS group. The parents' food stamp case is closed and the worker added the new household members to Rosa's TFS case.

APPLYING FOR REGULAR FOOD STAMPS

During the TFS Benefit Period

The request to end TFS and apply for regular FS is processed as a recertification review. The question "Transitional FS Open, Do you want to re-apply for regular FS?" has been added to ACPA and will display when a household is eligible for TFS benefits.

ACPA SCREEN WITH NEW TFS QUESTION.

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ACPA                                PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE          02/12/04 07:59
CASE: 7700320071                    WORKER: XCT061          JX9216 L BAUER
LAST UPDATED: 02 05 04              CASE STATUS: OPEN      CASE MODE: ONGOING

PP: 01 NAME: YOKO                    RAY                      SSN: 351 02 3710
EFFECTIVE MMY: 0204                  OVERRIDE DATE: 02 05 04

PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE: FS
                                FOOD STAMPS
REQUESTING THIS PROGRAM/SUB PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE? (Y/N): Y
INDIVIDUALS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE

    01 Y   02 Y   03 Y

TRANSITIONAL FS OPEN, DO YOU WANT TO RE-APPLY FOR REGULAR FS? (Y/N): N

DO YOU REQUEST SEPARATE FS FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED PERSON UNABLE
TO PURCHASE AND PREPARE MEALS DUE TO DISABILITY? (Y/N): N
-----INDIVIDUALS-----
    01 YOKO  R (PP )    02 KUMIK R (DAU)    03 TIM   T (NOT)

NEXT TRAN: _____ PARMS: 7700320071_____ MORE..

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When a household requests to end their TFS benefits and apply for regular FS benefits, the worker trans to ACPA and answers <Y> to this question. The worker must enter changes reported by the customer and run SFED/SFEX to determine a regular FS allotment amount. A new CARES screen, TFS/FS CHOICE SCREEN (EFTF) has been added to display both the TFS benefit amount and the regular FS amount, determined using the changes entered during the interview. The recipient has the choice of which allotment they will receive.

NEW FS CHOICE SCREEN – EFTF

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EFTF                      TFS / FS CHOICE SCREEN                      09/09/03 11:23
CASE: 5000507657    CAT: FS    SEQ: 01                      WORKER: XCTD57    XCTD57 B KING
LAST UPDATED: 08 13 03                      CASE STATUS: OPEN    CASE MODE: INTAKE

PP: 01 NAME: BETTE                      SAND                      EFFECTIVE MMY: 0803

YOUR TRANSITIONAL FOOD STAMP ALLOTMENT IS:      XXXX.XX

      YOUR FOOD STAMP ALLOTMENT WOULD BE:      XXXX.XX

              THIS IS A DIFFERENCE OF: +/- XXXX.XX

WHICH ALLOTMENT AMOUNT DO YOU WISH TO RECEIVE: TRANSITIONAL (T)
OR REGULAR (R) FS? (T/R) _

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The worker will enter the choice, “T” for TFS or “R” for regular. Once a “T” has been entered to indicate the recipient has chosen to remain on TFS, the worker will have to rerun SFEX/SFED to change the choice to an “R”. If an “R” is entered to indicate the recipient has chosen the regular Food Stamp benefit, the field will blank out if the worker either trans back to a budget screen or reruns SFEX/SFED. This allows the worker to change the choice indicated on EFTF anytime before confirmation.

If the regular FS benefit is chosen, a face-to-face recertification review must be completed. If the household chooses to continue receiving the TFS benefit a recertification review is not required.

TFS benefits will continue to be issued while verification is pending. If verification is not turned in, the TFS benefits will continue through the end of the five month benefit period. Once regular FS benefits are confirmed, the TFS will end. Should a household apply for FS after adverse action (AA) in the fourth month of the TFS benefit period, the EFTF comparison screen will not display because the households’ TFS eligibility ends in the recurring month.

NOTE ➤ Changes reported during the face to face recertification request may effect other assistance programs the customer receives.

When TFS Benefit Period Expires

The TFS benefit period will end after five months. TFS households will receive a notice approximately 45 days before the end of the TFS benefit period to contact their worker to schedule the recertification review. To continue receiving FS benefits the household must complete a face to face recertification review before the end of the 5th month of the TFS benefit period. The applicant must complete the review and submit necessary verification for their household’s current situation to avoid any gap in FS benefits. If the review is not completed, the FS case will close and a new application will be required.

Example: Steve’s household receives TFS. His girlfriend had triplets and will be unable to work for three months. Steve called his worker on May 12th to find out if his household allotment would increase on regular FS. The worker schedules a face to face interview with Steve. At the interview, Steve provides all of the necessary verification items, the worker runs eligibility and screen EFTF shows that the regular food stamp amount is greater than the TFS amount, the worker confirms the regular FS case, which will start in June.

TRAINING

In response to requests from local agency staff to offer quality training in the most effective and efficient way, DWD/DHFS Partner Training Services (PTS) will be using a distance learning approach to deliver training materials for the Transitional Food Stamps (TFS) initiative. This approach is made possible by the implementation of an improved Learning Management System (LMS), called the PTS Learning Center. The PTS Learning Center is an upgrade to the current registration system and, beginning in February 2004, will be used to access and track both distance and in-person training events via the Internet. The PTS Learning Center can be accessed at <http://www.uwosh.edu/ccdet/wss/>. A short introduction on how to use the PTS Learning Center is available by clicking the "PTS Learning Center Course Access Resource Guide" link. It is suggested that this information be reviewed prior to beginning the TFS course.

The TFS training program will consist of two courses – one for IM workers who determine eligibility for Food Stamp cases containing W-2 participants, and another for FEPs who work with W-2 participants but do not determine eligibility for Food Stamps. Each course is intended to be used in conjunction with this Operations Memo.

The courses will appear individually when you log into the PTS Learning Center and workers only need to take one of the courses:

- It is highly recommended (but not mandatory) that any worker who determines eligibility for Food Stamps for cases containing W-2 participants take the TFS for IM Workers course. The course consists of:
 - A quiz about the information conveyed in this memo
 - A Training Supplement Guide with expanded information about TFS
 - A PowerPoint containing a TFS example and scenario
 - A course evaluation
- It is highly recommended (but not mandatory) that FEPs who work with W-2 participants but do not determine eligibility for Food Stamps take the TFS for FEPs course. The course consists of a quiz, a Training Supplement Guide, and a course evaluation (there is no PowerPoint presentation for this course).

The training materials in this course are flexible enough to be used in either individual or group settings. As agencies have requested, the training materials that are part of this training course may be utilized in any way they see fit.

In the event that students taking the course encounter questions or issues, appropriate content and technical resource contact information will be included on the PTS Learning Center site and within the course materials themselves.

The course will be available on-line within a week of the release of this Operations Memo and will be available until June 30, 2004.

COURSE CREDIT

TFS FOR IM WORKERS

Two hours of IM professional development credit will be available upon completion of the TFS for IM Workers course. Those who access and complete the course individually will automatically have course completion recorded on their transcripts. If an agency wishes to use the materials in a group setting (e.g. as part of a staff meeting or mini-training session), please contact Theresa Fosbinder at Fosbitl@dhfs.state.wi.us or (608)261-8568 to establish a plan to ensure appropriate credit for all participants.

TFS FOR FEPS

One hour of W-2 professional development credit will be available upon completion of the TFS for FEPS course. Those who access and complete the course individually will automatically have course completion recorded on their transcripts. If an agency wishes to use the materials in a group setting (e.g. as part of a staff meeting or mini-training session), please use the annual agency training report to record participation.

CONTACTS

BHCE CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center

★Program Categories – FS – Food Stamps, MA – Medicaid, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – Food Stamp Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC - Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WtW – Welfare to Work, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, Other EP – Other Employment Programs.

DHFS/DHCF/BHCE/JE